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Study of Illegitimacy in Ontario



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*Study of Illegitimacy*  
*in Ontario*

Made Under the Direction of  
The Social Service Council  
of Ontario

By  
N. Emily Mohr



Pamphlet No. 8

February. 1921

# The Social Service Council of Ontario

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Complimentary Copy

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## Introduction and Acknowledgment

Those interested in the welfare of children in the Province of Ontario have been, for some time, concerned with the problem of the better protection and care of children born of unmarried parents and with a movement for better legislation in that direction. The Social Service Council of Ontario, believing that it might make a contribution to the Province in this matter, decided to undertake a study of the problem in Ontario and thereby help to bring about the introduction of legislation which would, by establishing a new responsibility, bring about the opportunity of a more normal life for the child born out of wedlock, as well as a more just dealing with the parents of the child and with the community.

With this purpose in mind the Council engaged a special worker, under its Child Welfare Section, to make a study of Illegitimacy in Ontario. The services of Miss Emily Mohr, a graduate of the Department of Social Service of the University of Toronto, and a worker of five years' practical experience in the field of social service, were secured, and the work begun in September, 1920. For five months since that time, Miss Mohr has devoted her whole time to a study of this problem. Almost 400 individual histories were collected, carefully studied and analyzed, a study was made of the problem as it existed in other countries, of the laws concerning it in this and other countries, and of the methods of treatment in use.

In addition to this, the sub-committee on Illegitimacy of the Social Service Council of Ontario joined with a similar sub-committee of the Neigh-

bourhood Workers' Association of Toronto, under whose auspices a study of illegitimacy in the City of Toronto was being conducted, and by joint conferences covering a period of three months, discussed the various ramifications of the problem and agreed upon a set of principles as the basis of legislation. (See Appendix.) These principles were adopted by a larger conference of representative social workers from various parts of the Province, were submitted to the Attorney-General of Ontario, and legislation covering these principles requested. Conferences have been held with Government officials, and the hope of the Council is, that the study made, the work done, and the effort put forth along this line in Ontario, may bear the fruit of a lower illegitimacy birth-rate, of a more generous attitude on the part of citizens towards the children of unmarried parents and their mothers, of better care assured to these children handicapped as they are by the circumstances of their birth, and of better opportunities for their development into useful and honourable citizens.

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to all those who by their co-operation assisted Miss Mohr in the discharge of her difficult task. This study would not have been possible without the courtesy and confidence shown in the giving of information by those to whom the personal histories of these unfortunate children and their mothers were known.

GILBERT AGAR,  
General Secretary.

Toronto, February 16th, 1921.

# THE STUDY

## Localities Where Study Was Made

The actual collecting of data by means of personal visits to localities in different parts of the Province of Ontario was confined to a period of two months. The method employed was to visit as many centrally located municipalities as possible, covering those having facilities for the care of the unmarried mother and her child, those providing only such facilities as were available for any maternity case, and those having no facilities for care outside the girl's own home.

As a study of illegitimacy was being conducted along casework lines in Toronto by the Neighbourhood Workers' Association of that city, this largest centre of the Province was not touched.

Two cities were visited, two towns, and one rural centre. The cities were located in widely different parts of the Province, one on the border of a neighbouring Province ; the other city being in the heart of a large agricultural district and a few hours' journey from one of the Province's main gateways to the United States. This latter city had a population of about 60,000, largely English-speaking Canadians, which was, in addition to being the centre of a large and prosperous agricultural district, a very considerable manufacturing centre. The former city with a population of some 110,000, mostly French and English-Canadians, was of a mixed character, commercial, agricultural and manufacturing.

The towns visited were situated rather near each other and although somewhat similar in both being busy railway and lumber centres, different in many other respects. One, having a population of some 8,000, was made up of about 12% foreign-speaking inhabitants, 40% French-Canadians and about 48% English-speaking Canadians and British. This town was the centre of a large mining industry, a busy railway centre, and one of the gateways to the Province's lumber camps, the population being largely of a floating character. The other town was of some 10,000 population, about 75% being English-speaking Canadians and British, the other 25%

being composed largely of Italians and French-Canadians. It was situated at the junction of three important railroads and was an important commercial centre for that district. The rural district visited represented much isolation, inadequate housing, poor facilities of livelihood or education, and with no community development for mutual betterment, mentally, socially or physically.

Provision made for the care of unmarried mothers and their infant children in those places visited was as follows :

In the two cities there were four Maternity Hospitals and Homes, two Infants' Homes or Orphanages, and one Private Licensed Maternity Home, in addition to the regular public and private hospitals. In the towns there were two general hospitals, giving care during the confinement period only, and in the rural districts no provision was made. In these latter localities outside the two hospitals giving care during confinement only, when a prospective unmarried mother was without a home of her own, there was only the ordinary jail as a refuge for her unless she were sent to some other locality providing special facilities. None of the hospitals had Social Service Departments. In all places there was a Children's Aid Society which under certain circumstances connected with "neglect" or "delinquency" would take responsibility for the child apart from the mother.

### **Method and Extent of Study**

In gathering information regarding individual cases, the method adopted was to take those children born of unmarried parents within the year immediately preceding the enquiry, and to gather as far as possible from those agencies and persons concerned with their care a social history of the child, its mother and its father. To the records kept in regard to any case was added verbal information recorded only in the mind and memory of the persons coming in contact with any of the children or their parents. In no case was either the mother or the father interviewed at first-hand ; the reason for this is obvious in a matter of such a private nature and concerning such intimate relationships.

Some history was secured in regard to 374 children born during the year under enquiry in the localities studied, or found in those localities. Twelve of

these children were twins and their histories involved therefore, the histories of 368 mothers and fathers. The data gathered in regard to these three factors were tabulated and analyzed and the results are here presented.

In addition to these 374 histories, there were found in institutions in the two cities visited 27 illegitimate children born within the year immediately prior to the enquiry, about whom practically nothing was known regarding their parentage or antecedents.

Eleven of these children had died previous to the enquiry, that is over 40%. Only two of these children were foundlings, so that there were 25 infants placed in institutions in these two cities within one year of whom practically nothing was known. In most of the cases there seems to have been a story told when the baby was brought to the institution, but no full record of this was kept and no investigation made. There is little doubt that the institutions are, in these cases, honestly trying to follow the best course for both mother and child, but the question arises, should we sacrifice the child in these cases, for that is what it means when a child of this age is taken into an institution without its mother.

Still farther back than this question arises another, should we stigmatize an unmarried mother and thus bring about indirectly this separation from her child? Does not the responsibility go back not so much to the agencies or institutions dealing with the case, but to society as the projecting force of the stigma on the mother and her child?

An attempt was made also to determine whether or not there was in Ontario any relationship between illegitimacy and delinquency. However, it was found that in neither the Juvenile Courts nor the Industrial Schools (with one exception) was information available as to whether or not the boys and girls under 16 years of age passing through their hands were of illegitimate birth.

In the case of the one Industrial School where information was available it was found that 14% of the inmates during the Institution's previous year, were of illegitimate birth. Of these over one-half were mental defectives. In one School also five per cent. of the girls were unmarried mothers, over 60% of this number being mentally defective. It was

also found that 18% of those women in the State Reformatory for the last year had given birth to children out of wedlock. Sixty per cent. of these were mental defectives.

It was impossible with the limited data available to establish the relationship between delinquency and the fact of birth out of wedlock as far as Ontario was concerned. The experience in those countries, however, where such information is available shows a very clear relationship traceable to those cases where the illegitimate child, because of his lack of opportunities, of proper home surroundings and care due to his dependency and the stigma on his birth, has developed criminal tendencies. On the other hand striking instances are available in all countries of men and women of illegitimate birth who because of proper home care and careful upbringing have become valuable and useful citizens.

### History of the Children

Of the total number of children born in the period under enquiry 76% were born in hospitals or maternity homes, 21% in the mother's own home or a rooming house, and in 3% the type of shelter at birth was not known. (Table I., Appendix.) In addition to those registered as illegitimate (88%) there were 3% registered as legitimate and 9% were not registered at all (Table II.). Of those born in institutions very few escaped registration, but in those cases where the type of shelter was unknown all of them had escaped registration. This would indicate that a certain number of illegitimate children fail to be registered each year. In a number of cases also it was found that birth registrations were incomplete. This was due to the fact that when the birth was registered by the doctor in attendance and no return was made from the parents, the card sent out by the Registrar for completion of the required information would be returned with "not found" or "moved—no address" on it.

By far the largest proportion of the children found were born in cities (Table I.). This is very natural, for it is in the larger cities that a girl about to become a mother can most easily find the care and protection and privacy which she needs. In the majority of cases also the mothers were found to have had their usual residence previous to

confinement outside the locality where the child was born (Table XII.)

There were 18 stillbirths (5%) in the total number considered so that 356 children were born living. Of this number 29% were known to have died, 25% were not known whether to be living or dead, and 46% were known to be still living at the time of the enquiry (Table III.)

Of those born in Hospitals and Maternity Homes 118 or 43% were known to be still living. Sixty of these were still with their mothers, seven being from 9-12 months of age, 15 from 6-9 months, 18 from 3-6 months and 20 being three months old and under (Tables IV. and V.). It will be seen from this that in the small proportion of those children born in the Hospitals and Maternity Homes and known to be still living at the time of the enquiry, only one-fifth were with their mothers after six months. Only seven of those children who were known to be still with their mothers after six months had left the institutions. Two of these seven mothers were in domestic service, two were at home with their parents, one (a very young girl) was with her aunt, one had just left one of the institutions with her baby but was not likely to keep it very long, and one girl whose parents refused to take her home was being befriended by some people in her church and was supporting and caring for her baby with splendid courage and devotion. *In no instance had the father taken any responsibility as far as was known.*

Forty of those children born in the institutions and still living were in Orphanages or Homes without their mothers. Of all of the children born in the period under enquiry known to be still with their mothers outside of institutions, over two-thirds had been born in the mother's own home. (Table IV.) The proportion of those children who had left the institutions where they were born, with their mothers, and who might still be with their mothers, would doubtless be greater if their subsequent disposition could be traced, but in 36 of these cases nothing was actually known of the present whereabouts of the child.

In limiting the enquiry to the period of one year immediately past, it was not possible to find exactly the length of time each child had the personal care of its own mother, because in some instances only a short time had elapsed since the birth and although

the child was still with its mother when enquired about, it could not be established how much longer it would remain so. It was stated in a number of these instances that the mother "would not keep her baby," or that the baby was so delicate it "would probably not live," or that the girl "was needed at home and could not stay with her baby." Some idea of the length of time spent with the mother can be formed, however, by Tables VI. and VII. From these it would appear that a great many children are not kept with their mothers after the first month of their lives. The question then arises, "Does this fact affect the death-rate?"

Whether or not separation from the mother had any effect on the deaths of the children could not be directly established in this study, because so many of the children considered would not have been born a full year before. This question was, however, studied from the standpoint of the feeding of the child. In most of the cases where child and mother were kept together the child was breast-fed, so that indirectly the question may be answered.

So little was known of the feeding of those children born outside the institutions that nothing could be concluded in regard to these as to the relationship between physical condition, death-rate and feeding. Referring only to those born in the institutions, the relationship between feeding and physical condition was quite clear. Among the breast-fed children those rated as being healthy were over twice as many as those rated in poor health; while among the bottle-fed babies those in poor health were almost twice as many as those in good health (Table VIII.)

Of those children born in institutions and rated as being in poor physical condition, 23% or almost one-quarter had venereal disease. Of the total number of children born alive 7% were known to have venereal disease.

Of the babies who lived longer than six days after birth, 73% of those who were breast-fed were known to be still living at the time of the enquiry, and 20% had died, while of those not breast-fed 43% had died. In actual numbers those babies who were bottle-fed and had died (all within a period of less than nine months) were three times as many as those babies breast-fed who had died (within the same period). (Table IX.)

Out of a total of 356 live births, 105 were known to have died, or 29%. The deaths during this period of less than one year in the large majority of the children studied were probably even greater than this appallingly high rate, because in 25% of the cases, it was not known whether the child was still living or not. In the report of the Registrar-General of Ontario for the year 1918, being the last issued, the total death-rate for all children under one year of age born in the Province was 99 per thousand or about 10%.

In studying the ages of those children who died, it was found that the greatest number of deaths took place in the period between one month and six months. This would seem to have been the critical time in the first year of the child's life, and it is significant also that mother and child were separated most frequently during this period (Table X.)

As already stated, in 25% of the total number of children it was unknown whether they were living or dead, their exact whereabouts at the time of the enquiry not being known. Some of these could be no further traced than the registration of their births, others were known to be variously disposed of shortly after birth, but nothing known of them since, and those born in the ordinary hospitals were rarely found trace of after leaving there with the mother three weeks after confinement.

There were found to be 144 children who had been adopted out or taken for the mother. Only 13 of these had gone through the hands of the Children's Aid Society. Two-thirds of them were placed or left in institutions without the mother, and almost one-quarter had been adopted out into families privately (Table XI.). These last of course have no supervision, and although some of them may have found good homes, there is a great element of chance in such an arrangement both for the child and the foster-parents. In several instances the child was found afterwards to be in most unsuitable surroundings, detrimental to its health and future moral development.

Of these 144 children placed out or adopted, the reasons for so doing were as follows: Mother unable to maintain in 87 cases, to avoid disgrace in 35 cases, child abandoned or deserted in 9 cases, and no reason stated in 13 cases (Table X.). In

60% of these cases mother and child were separated because of the former's inability to maintain her child. In some instances this inability to maintain was due to the fact that the girl was living at home, and because of certain conditions there such as younger children in the family, or her parents' refusal to support the baby, was unable to provide a home for it.

It is to be noted that in a considerable number of cases where the child was taken from the mother for adoption, varying lump sum payments were made to this end, usually by the girl herself, sometimes by the girl's relatives, and in a few instances by the father of the child. These payments were considered as compensation for the expense connected with the adoption or for the care of the child in case no home was readily found for it.

## History of the Mothers

The study of these 374 children born within the year immediately past when the enquiry regarding them was undertaken, involved 368 mothers. As already stated none of these mothers were interviewed, so that the data collected in regard to them were taken from records and from verbal information given by those coming in contact with them. In no place visited was standard case-work done in the treatment of these mothers and their children, and records kept were most inadequate to a thorough understanding of individual cases. In one city a slight exception might be made in regard to case-work. A family case-work agency was in operation there, but it had dealt with so few cases involving the problem of illegitimacy in the course of its existence that its usefulness in that regard was too limited to be of real value. It had only dealt with one such child and its mother, born within the year covered in the study, and in that city during the same period there had been 38 illegitimate children found to have been born in the mother's own home or a rooming-house, in addition to 58 born in Institutions of the city whose mothers were residents of the city. The material in regard to the mothers of the children studied was therefore very superficial.

Of the mothers involved 76% were in Hospitals and Maternity Homes at confinement, 21% were confined in their own homes or in rooming-houses,

and of 3% the type of the place of confinement was not known. Only 12% of those in Institutions had private rooms, and 6% semi-private rooms. In 35% of the cases the mother's usual previous residence was in the same municipality as that in which her confinement took place, in 51% she previously resided outside the locality of confinement, and in 14% the previous residence was unknown. (Table XII.)

Eighty per cent. of all mothers were between the ages of 16 and 30, and of these by far the larger number (53% of the total) were from 16 to 21 years of age. Two mothers were only 13 years of age, one of these being considered feeble-minded. The age of the mothers would appear to have some relation to the type of shelter at confinement, as about 95% of those who went into the Institutions were under 31 years of age. Between the ages of 31 and 45 confinement took place more generally outside of Institutions (Table XIII.). The fact of a mother being married or unmarried also appeared to have some bearing on the kind of shelter sought at confinement. Ninety per cent. of all those mothers who went into Hospitals or Maternity Homes were unmarried, while 58% of those outside the Institutions were unmarried. Eighty-two per cent. of all mothers were single, 8% being married or widowed, and 10% unknown (Table XIV.). One concludes from this that the girl with no other shelter than her parents' home, her employer's home (if a domestic), or a rooming-house, is more likely than not to go to an Institution for protection and care at this time.

The occupations of the mothers studied were found to be very varied, the greatest number being found to be living at home or working as domestics, each being 26% of the total (Table XV.). Ten out of the total number were still attending school at the time of their misfortune, but as nothing was known of the fathers of the children in any except one of these 10 cases, it could not be ascertained whether or not school-mates or older men were generally concerned. Although 26% were said to be living at home the information obtained did not show how many of the mothers were *not* living at home. Only in 35 cases was there evidence that this was so, and yet the fact that a girl was living away from home would probably in many cases have been a factor in considering causes.

Seventy-three per cent. of all mothers studied (269) were born in Canada. Ten mothers were born in the United States, 48 were born in the British Isles and 5 in European countries (Table XVI.).

In regard to the education of the mothers the records kept did not furnish information. The data for this were furnished from memory of contact with the girl for periods varying from 3 weeks to 9 months. For the purpose of this study a girl who had gone to High School or further was considered to have a "good" education, one having reached only the medium grades as "poor," and the primary grades only or no school at all as "very poor." With this standard and the indefinite information furnished it was found that there were about as many above the "fair" standard as below it of those of whom any rating was made. Only 15% of the total were designated "good," 24% were "fair," 17% "poor" and 20% "very poor," 24% being unknown. It was apparent that the majority of the mothers were of inferior education (Table XVII.).

An attempt was made also to get some estimate of the physical and mental condition of the mothers, but here again the handicap of inadequate records was met. An estimate was made in general terms only of the health condition deduced from observation following confinement, with the result that more than one-half were considered to be in good health. Out of 368 mothers, 96 were said to be in poor physical condition. Out of these 37 had venereal disease or 10% of the total number. Three mothers had tuberculosis, 4 died following confinement, and in 52 cases designated as in poor health the special condition was not known or was not stated otherwise than as anaemic. There was evidence in some instances that the girl had endangered her own life or that of her child by attempts to bring on an abortion, and in many other instances the health of both was injured by attempts to hide the condition of approaching motherhood.

In no instances had there been a mental test made of the mother, and it was only in those cases where there was, to the mind of the informant, some very obvious mental defect, that they were designated subnormal. The data thus supplied showed 54% as of normal mentality, 23% sub-

normal, 7% doubtful and 16% unknown (Table XVIII.). In the Toronto General Hospital where mental tests are regularly made the percentage of subnormal girls is considerably higher than this, and it perhaps would be found to be higher than the estimate of this study were proper mental tests made. It is clear that a considerable proportion of unmarried mothers are of weak mentality and that this factor in itself is responsible to a large degree for motherhood out of wedlock.

In 51% of the cases where her baby was born alive the mother showed interest in her child. She was indifferent in only 17% (Table XIX.), and yet as we have seen 38% of the children were known to be separated from their mothers within the first nine months of their lives, the reason for the separation in the majority of cases being "inability to maintain."

What happens to the mother after the birth of her child and the period spent in a Maternity Home (if any) nursing it? The records of the Institutions show where the girl is discharged to, but whether or not she remains there or what happens to her afterwards is seldom known. None of the Institutions had field workers to follow up the girl or to do everything possible to rehabilitate the girl in her own home, in industrial life, or whatever it might be, and only in the minority of cases was there a connection with the girl through outside workers and this usually of a religious nature.

Thirty-seven per cent. of the mothers were said to be living at home subsequently, 13% boarding or at domestic service. Those in an Institution temporarily (13%) were those who had not as yet been discharged from Hospitals or Maternity Homes at the time of the inquiry. A small number were in Institutions indefinitely. All of these except two were mental defectives confined in an Institution because of delinquency or, lacking a home, were unable to protect themselves. One feeble-minded girl was in jail awaiting trial on four charges. One mother with tuberculosis was in an Hospital indefinitely. Eight mothers were living with the father of the child, two of these had been married following the birth of the child, five were living together as man and wife unmarried, and one mother was living with the man as his housekeeper. In

21% of the cases nothing was known, even of a hypothetical nature, about the girl's living arrangements after the confinement period. (Table XX.)

In 43% of the cases nothing was known of the girl's social background, what sort of home she came from, what was the character of the neighbourhood in which she lived, her working environment, or any of those forces which might be regarded as contributing causes to the position in which she found herself. In fact, in practically no instance was there anything like an adequate insight into the social history of the girl. This would only be possible where careful case-work was being done and so far as could be established the city of Toronto was the only centre in Ontario where such a method was being pursued.

In the other 57% there was some knowledge, more or less slight, of the antecedents of the mother. In 35 instances the girl was living away from home ; in 28 instances the girl's mother was not living and in 4 of these there was a step-mother ; in 27 instances there was evidence of loose living on the part of the girl, this being combined in many cases with mental defect, bad companions, immorality in the home, mother not living or poor standard of home life. Defectives seem to have been generally promiscuous. The parents were both dead in 25 instances and there were 10 instances where the girl had been brought to Canada by charitable organizations. In 15 instances the girl's father was dead, and in 4 of these there was a step-father. In 10 instances the girl had a sister who was an unmarried mother and in 6 instances there was evidence that the girl herself was of illegitimate birth, one instance showing 3 generations of illegitimate birth. Mental defect in the family was evident in 8 instances, immorality in the home in 7, a poor standard of home life in 6. In those cases where the mother of the child was a married woman 12 of them were separated from their husbands. There was also evidence in some instances that the girl had had no instruction in sex hygiene and did not know the dangers of undue intimacy with the opposite sex. In this connection it is interesting to note that in an article by Dr. R. H. Patterson in the Canadian Public Health Journal for December 1920, he says, "Not one girl who has come to the City Hospital for treatment for venereal diseases

had been able to state that she received sex instruction at home." One wonders what would be the result of such an enquiry of unmarried mothers. There is evidence that it would be very similar. In a considerable number of the cases (34) the mothers were stated to have come from good homes, some of them well-to-do. In a number of cases there was evidence of poverty and the overcrowding which this meant. Those coming from rural sections as well as from towns and cities frequently came from small overcrowded homes of no more than two rooms, and a story of isolation in a rural section and long hours of hard work with little or nothing in the way of amusement or recreation, was occasionally met. Here and there were histories of a most revolting character, but these were always concerned with the problem of mental defect. In a very few cases the girl was thought to be a prostitute from evidence collected, and there were 4 known cases of incest. The histories revealed as many different problems as there were cases, covering a great variety of circumstances, from the case where a man and girl, after leaving the Hospital with the baby, drove to an outlying district, asked a boy on the street to look after the baby until they went to get something, and then never came back, to the girl who went insane following her confinement because of the worry and heart-breaking circumstances connected with her condition.

There was in a considerable number of cases the great desire to keep everything secret even at the risk of sacrificing the future and often the life of the baby. Fifteen cases were not known to the parents of the girl, some were known to the girl's mother but not to the rest of the family, and some were not known to any one except the father of the child. Thirteen of the mothers were known to have entered the Institutions under assumed names, and in a few instances the baby's birth was registered under an assumed name. There were instances where the girl would give no information about herself and could not be persuaded to tell her story. In many instances of those mothers who were quite normal mentally, the girl felt her condition most keenly and suffered greatly in regard to it. In some cases there was evidence of lack of parental control, in others the

girl was easily led and had come under bad influences.

Sixty-one mothers were known to have had other children in addition to the present one. Sixteen had had 52 legitimate children, 43 had had 66 other illegitimate children and 2 had had 4 other children who were not known to be legitimate or illegitimate.

### **History of the Fathers**

In 65% of the total number of cases studied, nothing whatever was known of the fathers of the children concerned. In the remaining 35%, nothing like full information respecting even such items as age, occupation and residence, was available. In 267 cases the man's usual residence was not known, in 306 cases his age was unknown, in 277 cases it was not known whether he was single, married or a widower. His occupation was unknown in 276 cases, and whether or not he took any responsibility in the matter was unknown in 251 cases. As to the father's mentality, education, or social history nothing whatever could be ascertained in any case. Whether or not the child was born in an institution or outside seemed to make no difference in the amount of information available regarding the paternity of the child.

In those few cases about which anything was known, it was found that the alleged father's usual residence was mostly the same as that of the mother, but in less than half of these was it the same as the place of confinement. Where the age was known it was usually between 16 and 30, about as many being under 21 as over it. In three-fourths of the cases where the father's status was known, he was not married. The few cases (92) in which the alleged father's occupation was known, covered a wide variety of vocations, such as unskilled labour other than farm, under which came the greatest number, farmers and farm labourers, soldiers, discharged or otherwise, trainmen, commercial travellers, shop keepers, barbers, civil servants and a miscellaneous group representing skilled labour, clerks, lawyers, bookkeepers and one young father still at school.

In the matter of responsibility on the part of the fathers of the children, as already stated, nothing whatever was known in the large majority of cases

(69%). Of the remaining 31% there were 11 instances where the father took full responsibility. In eight of these the parents of the child were living together unmarried, in two instances they had married following the child's birth, and in one instance the father, a married man living with his own legal family, was paying for the baby's board in a private family, supplying everything necessary, and had paid all the expenses of confinement, the full responsibility being taken quite voluntarily. In 11 instances the alleged father had absconded and there were 11 instances in which he had paid the confinement expenses or a lump sum for the adoption of the child. In eight instances the alleged father was known to have been prosecuted but the result was unknown. In seven he made some contribution voluntarily, and in seven instances also he offered marriage to the girl, but was refused usually because of her parents' objection. In six instances it was believed that the man and girl intended to be married, in five the girl or her parents were unwilling that any steps should be taken to make the alleged father pay anything. An attempt to prosecute the alleged father was known to have failed in five instances, and in four instances payment was forced by legal procedure. Marriage followed the birth of the child in three cases, and in two cases, although there was proof of paternity, there was no prosecution or known settlement made. In 48 of these cases no responsibility was taken by the alleged father, as far as could be ascertained.

Very seldom in those few cases where any payments of money were made could the amount be ascertained. In one case \$800 was paid, in another \$600, and in a case of incest \$4,000 was paid to the mother. In another instance where the girl was 14 years of age, two men were given sentences of one year each under the criminal code.

In four of the municipalities visited the following statistics were secured as to affidavits of affiliation filed within the last three years.

In 1917 there were 10 ;

In 1918 there were 5 ;

In 1919 there were 7 ; and

In 1920 (during the first nine months) there was only one.

It is clear that the affidavit of affiliation, required under the present Illegitimate Children's Act, is

not used to any extent. Questioned in regard to it those in contact with the cases of illegitimacy in all localities visited stated that the girl with any self-respect would seldom face the ordeal which it meant to her to make this affidavit, and because of the limitations of the present Illegitimate Children's Act such an affidavit was too easily rendered useless.

There were a very few cases where the father of the child had been a "picked-up" acquaintance of the girl considered to be of normal mentality, but there were a considerable number where the girl was either genuinely fond of the father of her child or had been engaged to him. There were instances where the father was a boarder in the girl's home or where they were both living in the same boarding house. Some of the cases were traceable to a vacation period spent away from home. Three of the mothers of apparent normal mentality claimed assault, and there were instances where the girls had clearly been taken advantage of by unscrupulous men.

## Conclusions

Perhaps the most outstanding features of this study are the facts that so little is actually known of what becomes of a large number of illegitimate children, even in that period of one year or less after birth ; that almost nothing is known in regard to their fathers ; and what is known of their mothers is quite inadequate to a proper understanding and disposal of each case individually, and to an insight into the underlying causes of this great social problem.

By making it easy for the father to escape his responsibilities we endanger the life of the child and leave to unkind chance its future welfare. We do little to build up inhibitions in the mother, who too often goes back to former surroundings of almost insurmountable handicaps. Is our policy of freeing the father of his responsibilities good for the father himself ? Many fathers would, no doubt, do their duty to the child (especially were that duty made quite clear by our laws) if a wise and tactful social worker approached him personally and appealed to his better side. Prosecution would then often be unnecessary. On the other hand it should be possible to make a father assume his full duty towards the child. Our present inadequate laws

hold out no encouragement for the mother and for the community towards a fair sharing of the burden on the part of the father.

The problem of illegitimacy tends to concentrate very largely in the larger centres of population because it is here that a prospective unmarried mother finds protection and care and secrecy, and for this reason the illegitimacy birth-rate in the cities is usually higher than in other smaller centres. Here too it has been shown that the mother can most easily "get rid of" her child. The study has shown that in the majority of cases the mother resided at the time of impregnation outside the locality in which the birth of the child took place.

The problem is also confined very largely to unmarried women between the ages of 16 and 30, and especially to those between 16 and 21. This is the age of adolescence, the age of greatest danger to the girl who has not had the best home influences surrounding her, a wise parental control or an environment of youth which would develop within her the finer moral standards.

Mental defect was seen to be a factor of very great importance in this study, and yet in no case was there a mental examination of the mother. Because a girl is an unmarried mother does not mean that she should be subjected to a mental test, but wherever there is reason to believe that abnormal mentality may be a factor or where the mentality of the mother is a matter of doubt, there should be a careful examination. What may appear to be mental subnormality to the lay person may be in reality adolescent instability or a defect in self-control, while on the other hand what may appear to be waywardness or incorrigibility may sometimes be deficient mentality. These things ought to be made clear in individual cases, because the abnormal girl cannot be treated in the same way as the normal girl.

Venereal disease was known to have been present in 10% of the mothers studied and in 7% of those children born alive. It is not known to what extent still-births may have been due to this cause.

In this study it was found that 12% of the illegitimate births within the one year just past were either not registered at all or were registered as legitimate. It is estimated on good authority that at least 25% of illegitimate children born in Ontario are not registered.

With occasional exceptions the mothers in this study were found to be girls of poor or medium education and advantages. Their occupations were largely those which did not require any very great intelligence. The histories obtained were mostly of those girls who, through the fact of unmarried motherhood, became dependent either physically or economically. A girl of high intelligence and able to take care of herself financially would be much more apt to succeed in some clandestine disposal of her case than would the girl earning a low or moderate wage or whose family were in very moderate circumstances, and having perhaps a lower degree of intelligence to cope with the situation. Therefore, it cannot be said that those in certain occupations are more liable than others to become unmarried mothers.

Behind the lives of many girls involved in this study was evidence of bad environment, poor home conditions and lack of opportunity for self-expression. These conditions are not confined to cities, they exist also in our towns and our rural districts. Many of the mothers came from surroundings where there was little opportunity for recreation and that often of a questionable character, from homes where whole families lived in one or two rooms, from employments around which there was built up nothing of a preventive nature to protect the girl lacking self-control or the training and education necessary to high standards in regard to the whole question of sex.

In the majority of cases the mother had shown a decided interest in her child, and there were pathetic instances of keen suffering on the part of the mother over an apparent necessity of parting with her child. Some histories showed the mother bravely struggling against the greatest odds in order to keep her child. One mother, earning only \$10 a week, was paying for the board of herself and her baby and struggling to supply what was necessary for both their needs. The result was that the health of both child and mother was being steadily undermined, and yet to part with her baby would have broken that girl's heart. She was entirely capable of giving her child the best of care in all other respects but that of finance. Yet because of this lack the baby was very unlikely to survive the first year of its life, and if it did survive would likely grow up with an impoverished physique as its inheritance.

Only one-fifth of those children born in Hospitals and Maternity Homes and known to be still living were with their mothers after six months from the time of their birth. Too little was known of those born outside the institutions to make even an estimate on this point. It was clear in this study that the child's right to the love and care of its own mother was being denied it to far too great an extent, and yet with the combination of the stigma attached to illegitimacy, the lack of the means of support for the child and the lack of a wise and adequate social service, this was inevitable. Shall we go on sacrificing the lives and future welfare of hundreds of these innocent little ones in Ontario each year? Or shall we for the sake of the welfare of these future citizens endeavour to remove the misconceptions and prejudices surrounding their parentage, shall we give them the right to proper home care, maintenance and education, and shall we insist on a social service wise and competent to deal with each separate case as an individual problem depending for its solution often on the improvement of conditions in our communities and a higher standard of home life?

Many of these tragic histories might never have been enacted had a wise social service been at work in the years preceding the event of unmarried motherhood in the lives of these girls. The mentally defective girl of child-bearing age ought not to be left unprotected from herself and the forces of evil. No one knows how many illegitimate children some of them have had, but one woman in this study was known to have had five who were living, one of them being 20 years of age and a very undesirable citizen, while another mother had had three in as many different municipalities and being still young was likely to go on adding to the number for some years to come. These unfortunate girls are incapable of self-control except under the most careful supervision.

Legislation should, by placing responsibility on the natural parents of the child where that is possible and in the best interests of the child, make provision for its care. It is the duty of the State to look to the welfare of those children handicapped by lack of a normal home. Only by so doing will it raise the quality of its future citizenship. And hand in hand with such an enlightened responsibility on the

part of the State must go increased efforts in the improvement of living conditions in our communities, in the building up of good influences within the homes, and of careful supervision of those employments which are surrounded by temptations for the girl living away from home. Recreation, too, is an important factor in the lives of young people and its value ought to be recognized more generally by parents and by the community at large.

In studying even the limited information procurable in connection with these 374 children born of unmarried parents the tragedies hidden in those histories have been revealed with most realistic forcefulness. There was revealed the tragedy of the child "whipped from pillar to post" in the effort to get rid of the visible sign of the mother's transgression of ethical standards, the tragedy of the child left to die for want of the nurture and care which is its God-given right, the tragedy of the child handicapped by a dwarfed and impoverished life such as is the result of institutional care for these or any children, and the tragedy of the child adopted into a home entirely unsuited to its needs. There was revealed, too, the tragedy of the mother unable because of defective mentality to protect herself, the tragedy of the mentally normal mother defective in self-control because of early sex experience, the tragedy of the mother ignorant of matters of sex hygiene, the tragedy of the mother away from home, whose only friend was a man in the same boarding house, or in the same employment, the tragedy of the mother facing ostracism from the family home rather than give up her child, and the tragedy of the mother willing and competent to care for her baby but forced, by inability to provide maintenance and shelter, to part with it.

The hope of the child of unmarried parents lies in more humanitarian methods of individual care and treatment, in the standard of home care made possible for the child, in the preservation of his right to a mother's love, and in the equal enjoyment of those things which are the birth-right of children born in wedlock within his own social group.

# APPENDIX

## Principles Adopted as a Basis of Legislation for the Protection of Children Born of Unmarried Parents

1. That the State should definitely assume responsibility for seeing that every child of unmarried parents is properly provided for, that is, that each case should be considered and disposed of according to the best accepted standards of social treatment.

2. That it shall be the duty of the State to initiate proceedings looking towards the establishment of the paternity of every child of unmarried parents.

It must be borne in mind that the intention is not to prejudice the right of a mother or agency or individual to take legal action, but such cases should, in every case, be conducted by the official and complainant.

Should the case be adjusted by private settlement or agreement the terms of such settlement or agreement must be subject to the approval of the Provincial official responsible, and shall be subject to court record.

3. That financial maintenance of the child should be borne by both parents according to the respective ability to provide, the standard of maintenance to be a reasonable one, approximating to what the child would have enjoyed if the parents were legally married.

4. If several men are implicated as probable fathers, the financial responsibility should be borne by all, but each responsible for the full amount.

5. That the child should have the same right of inheritance as children born in wedlock, should either parent die *intestate*.

6. That the child should be permitted the use of the father's name.

7. That subsequent marriage of the child's parents should automatically legitimize the child.

8. The expenses of child-birth should be borne by the father.

9. That no child of unmarried parents should be placed for home care in a home not its own, whether free or paid, by adoption or otherwise, unless subject to the approval of an official or agency duly authorized by the State.

(To this was added the opinion of the Committee that this last was a principle which should be applied as well to *all* children by a revision of the Children's Protection Act.)

**TABLE I.**

Type of Birthplace of 374 illegitimate children born within one year, classified according to Type of Shelter at time of Birth.

Character of Birthplace	Born in Institutions	Born in Mother's own home or rooming house	Type of Shelter at birth unknown	Total
Cities where study made	276	53	..	329 (87.96%)
Towns where study made	4	14	..	18 (4.81%)
Rural Districts	..	11	..	11 (2.94%)
Elsewhere	4	1	4	9 (2.41%)
Unknown	..	..	7	7 (1.88%)
Total	284	79	11	374 (100%)

**TABLE II.**

Registration of Births of 374 illegitimate children, classified according to Type of Shelter at time of Birth.

Registration	Born in Institutions	Born in mother's own home or rooming house	Shelter at birth unknown	Total
As "illegitimate"	257	72	..	329 (87.96%)
As "legitimate"	8	3	..	11 (2.95%)
None found*	19	4	11	34 (9.09%)
Total	284	79	11	374 (100%)

\*None of these were stillbirths

**TABLE III.**

Status of 356 Illegitimate Children born alive, at Time of Enquiry.

Status	Born in Institutions	Born in mother's own home or rooming house	Shelter at birth unknown	Total
Still living	118 (43.38%)	36	8	162 (45.51%)
Dead	92 (33.83%)	11	2	105 (29.49%)
Unknown whether living or dead	62 (22.79%)	26	1	89 (25%)
Total	272 (100%)	73	11	356 (100%)

Note—18 of the total number of children (4.81%) were stillborn.

**TABLE IV.**

Disposition of 162 Illegitimate Children Still Living at Time of Enquiry.

Disposition	Born in Institutions	Born in mother's own home or in rooming house	Shelter at birth unknown	Total
Still in Institution with mother	49	..	..	49
Outside Institution with mother	11	22	5	38
Institution without mother	40	5	..	45
Boarded out by mother	2	..	..	2
With relatives of father	..	1	..	1
With both parents	..	5	..	5
Adopted or placed in private home by C.A.S.	8	2	2	12
Adopted out privately	8	1	1	10
Total	118	36	8	162

**TABLE V.**

Ages of 60 Illegitimate Children known to be Living and with Their Mothers.

Ages in periods of 3 months	Still in Institutions with mothers	Outside Institutions with mothers	Total
3 months and under	18	2	20
3 months-6 months	16	2	18
6 months-9 months	9	6	15
9 months-12 months	6	1	7
Total	49	11	60

**TABLE VI.**

Length of time spent with mother, of 356 children born alive, as at time of enquiry, and classified according to status.

Time with mother	Known to be living	Known to have died	Unknown whether living or dead	Total
Taken away following birth	3	1*	2 (1*)	6
Up to 6 days	3	26	3	32
1 week-2 weeks	12	22	4	38
2 weeks-1 month	25	26	11	62
1 month-3 months	26	11	3	40
3 months-6 months	30	11	1	42
6 months-9 months	31	3	1	35
9 months-12 mos.	16	..	1	17
Unknown	16	5	63	84
Total	162	105	89	356

\*Mother died at birth.

**TABLE VII.**

Time Elapsing Between Birth of Illegitimate Children Studied who were born alive, and Time of Enquiry, classified according to Status.

Time Period	Living	Dead	Unknown whether living or dead	Total
1 week-2 weeks	3	..	..	3
2 weeks-1 month	5	..	1	6
1 month-3 months	32	8	18	58
3 months-6 months	39	24	22	85
6 months-9 months	44	46	27	117
9 months-12 mos.	39	27	21	87
Total	162	105	89	356

**TABLE VIII.**

Relation between Feeding and Health Condition of 272 Illegitimate Children Born Alive in Institutions within Period of One Year.

Health Condition	Breast Feeding	Artificial Feeding	Unknown* Feeding	Total
Good	58	38	1	97
Poor	27	66	17	110
Unknown	5	23	37	65
Total	90	127	55	272

\*These included 16 children who died within 6 days after birth.

**TABLE IX.**

Relation Between Feeding and Deaths of 256 Illegitimate Children born in Institutions who Lived Longer than Six Days after Birth.

Status within Nine Months after the Birth of any Child Studied	Breast Feeding	Artificial Feeding	Unknown Feeding	Total
Living at time of enquiry	66 (73.33%)	55 (43.31%)	1	122
Known to have died	18 (20%)	54 (42.52%)	1	73
Unknown whether living or dead	6 (6.67%)	18 (14.17%)	37	61
Total	90 (100%)	127 (100%)	39	256

**TABLE X.**

Age at Death of 105 Illegitimate Children known to have Died within Nine Months after the Birth of any Child, Classified According to Type of Shelter at Birth.

Age of Child at Death	Born in Institution	Born in mother's own Home or in Rooming House	Type of Shelter Unknown	Total
6 days and less	16	5	..	21
1 week-2 weeks	6	..	..	6
2 weeks-1 month	20	..	..	20
1 month-3 months	26	1	1	28
3 months-6 mos.	21	5	1	27
6 months-9 mos.	2	..	..	2
9 months-12 mos.	..	..	..	..
Unknown	..	..	1	1
Total	91	11	3	105

**TABLE XI.**

Disposition of 144 Illegitimate Children Separated from Mothers, and Reasons for Separation.

Disposition of Child	Inability of mother to Maintain	To Avoid Disgrace	Abandoned or Deserted	Not Stated	Total
Institution without Mother	60	25	4	8	97 (67.36%)
Adopted or placed in private families by C.A.S.	9	..	4	..	13 (9.03%)
Adopted out privately :					
(a) By Institution	8	4	1	.. 13	34 (23.61%)
(b) By Doctor or Nurse	2	2	..	1 5	
(c) By keeper of Private Maternity Home	5	2	..	1 8	
(d) By mother or relatives	3	2	..	3 8	
Total	87	35	9	13	144 (100%)

**TABLE XII.**

Usual Residence Prior to Confinement of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Residence	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Locality of Confinement	77	52	..	129 (35.05%)
Other Locality	179	8	2	189 (51.36%)
Locality Unknown	22	19	9	50 (13.59%)
Total	278 (75.54%)	79 (21.47%)	11 (2.99%)	368 (100%)

**TABLE XIII.**

Ages of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Ages	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or in Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
13-15	22 (7.91%)	3 (3.80%)	..	25 (6.79%)
16-21	158 (56.83%)	34 (43.04%)	2	194 (52.72%)
22-30	83 (29.86%)	18 (22.78%)	1	102 (27.72%)
31-45	10 (3.60%)	10 (12.66%)	1	21 (5.71%)
Unknown	5 (1.80%)	14 (17.72%)	7	26 (7.06%)
Total	278 (100%)	79 (100%)	11	368 (100%)

**TABLE XIV.**

Status of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Status	Confined in Institution	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Single	251 (90.29%)	46 (58.23%)	3	300 (81.52%)
Married	9 (3.24%)	7 (8.86%)	1	17 (4.62%)
Widow	7 (2.52%)	5 (6.33%)	1	13 (3.53%)
Unknown	11 (3.95%)	21 (26.58%)	6	38 (10.33%)
Total	278 (100%)	79 (100%)	11	368 (100%)

**TABLE XV.**

Occupation of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Occupations	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
At home	86	11	..	97
Domestic	85	9	2	96
Office work	18	1	..	19
Housewife	7	9	1	17
Factory worker	12	3	..	15
Waitress	10	3	..	13
Laundress or Char- woman	5	5	1	11
At school	8	2	..	10
Sales girl or clerk	7	2	..	9
Teacher	5	1	..	6
Seamstress	4	1	..	5
Housekeeper	3	2	..	5
Nurse	3	..	..	3
Telegrapher	1	1	..	2
Telephone operator	..	2	..	2
Chorus girl	..	1	..	1
Unknown	24	26	7	57
Total	278	79	11	368

**TABLE XVI.**

Country of Birth of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children classified according to Type of Shelter at Time of Confinement.

Country of Birth	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Canada	216	49	4	269 (73.10%)
United States	9	1	..	10 (2.72%)
British Isles	36	12	..	48 (13.04%)
European Countries	3	2	..	5 (1.36%)
Unknown	14	15	7	36 (9.78%)
Total	278	79	11	368 (100%)

**TABLE XVII.**

Education in General Terms of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children. Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Education	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Good	53 (19.06%)	2 (2.54%)	1	56 (15.22%)
Fair	78 (28.06%)	10 (12.66%)	1	89 (24.19%)
Poor	50 (17.99%)	13 (16.45%)	..	63 (17.12%)
Very Poor	62 (22.30%)	8 (10.13%)	2	72 (19.56%)
Unknown	35 (12.59%)	46 (58.22%)	7	88 (23.91%)
Total	278 (100%)	79 (100%)	11	368 (100%)

**TABLE XVIII.**

Apparent Mentality (deduced from observation only) of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children, Classified according to Type of Shelter at time of Confinement.

Mentality	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Normal	166	31	2	199 (54.07%)
Subnormal	69	13	2	84 (22.83%)
Doubtful	24	3	0	27 (7.34%)
Unknown	19	32	7	58 (15.76%)
Total	278	79	11	368 (100%)

**TABLE XIX.**

Interest Shown in Her Child by 350 Mothers of Illegitimate Children Who were Born Alive, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Interest	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or in Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
Decided	154 (57.90%)	23	1	178 (50.86%)
Casual	29 (10.90%)	10	..	39 (11.14%)
Indifferent	51 (19.17%)	6	1	58 (16.57%)
Unknown	32 (12.03%)	34	9	75 (21.43%)
Total	266 (100%)	73	11	350 (100%)

**TABLE XX.**

Disposition of 368 Mothers of Illegitimate Children following Confinement or Nursing Period, Classified according to Type of Shelter at Confinement.

Whereabouts	Confined in Institutions	Confined in own Home or in Rooming House	Type of Shelter at Confinement Unknown	Total
At home	108	29	1	138 (37.50%)
With relatives	14	4	1	19 (5.16%)
With strangers	40	7	1	48 (13.04%)
Institution temporarily	47	..	..	47 (12.77%)
Institution indefinitely	22	3	..	25 (6.79%)
With father of child	1	7	..	8 (2.18%)
Died	4	1	..	5 (1.36%)
Unknown	42	28	8	78 (21.20%)
Total	278	79	11	368 (100%)



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